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SUBJECT: BASRAH PROVINCIAL JOINT OPERATIONS CENTRE NEARLY READY TO OPEN

CLASSIFIED BY: Won Lee, Acting Director, Regional Embassy Office Basrah, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) Summary: On October 28, Senior Advisor Gordon Gray toured the newly operational Basrah Provincial Joint Operations Center (PJOC), located at the Basrah Operations Command (BOC). Conceived as a result of the poor communication among Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) components during Operation Charge-of-the-Knights (COK), the PJOC will serve as the coordination point for intelligence and operations between the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and the Ministry of Defense (MOD). It is scheduled to formally open on November 20 and will reach full operational capability early next year.

¶2. (C) Although the Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police (IP) both operate under the rubric of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), communication between the two organizations has been historically poor. The problem entered the national spotlight during COK, when IA and IP forces lacked coordination and generally operated independently. The PJOC aims to rectify the problem by bridging the communication gap among security entities in Basrah province via a state-of-the-art facility, where representatives from the MOD and MOI can securely exchange information and coordinate operations. The PJOC will achieve interim operational capability on November 19 and is expected to reach full operating capability in February 2009. Although it is not an original concept, the UK Officer-in-Charge of training praised the center as the only operation of its kind in Iraq.

¶3. (C) From a dilapidated room just five months ago, UK engineers and MNTSC-I contractors rebuilt the infrastructure of the PJOC site. Iraqi contractors added the final touches and the project was completed on October 24, 2008. For the last four months, a Coalition Force advisor team has been training seven shift directors and watch-keepers, recruited from key battle staff. Eighteen Liaison Officers from MOD and MOI began training on October 18. These officers are currently undergoing a training program to integrate them with the key battle staff and the branch staff.

¶4. (SBU) The PJOC is comprised of representatives from the following organizations, all of which fall under the MOI or the MOD:

- a. 14th IA Division
- b. Iraqi Police Service (IPS)
- c. National Police (Gendarmerie-style troops)
- d. Facilities Protection Service
- e. Department of Border Enforcement
- f. Iraqi Navy
- g. Iraqi Air Force
- h. Southern Oil Police
- i. Civil Defense
- j. Coastal Border Police

¶5. (C) There have been only a few minor problems associated with the project, including the failure of several Liaison Officers

to initially report for training on the start date. This problem has been overcome, however, and all officers have since reported for duty. Another problem has been breaking the Iraqis of their cell-phone habit, and getting them used to the PJOC's secure communications.

¶6. (C) Comment: The PJOC was a desperately needed concept, as demonstrated during COK. The Center will give security forces full situational awareness across the province and allow for inter-agency operations and intelligence. By permitting a better understanding of future operations, it should significantly improve the security situation in Basrah. The Iraqi Government will run the PJOC independently after the handover on November 20th. Coalition support will remain, albeit to a lesser degree, for an undetermined period. It is unclear how the British withdrawal, planned for early next year, will affect that support.

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